



SURVEY RESEARCH GROUP



OFFICE OF PLANNING, RESEARCH & EVALUATION

An Office of the Administration for Children & Families

Findings From The Early Head Start Research & Evaluation Project 2014 Mode Experiment



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- *The contents of this presentation do not necessarily represent the policy or opinions of ACF or DHHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.*

EHSREP

- **The Early Head Start Research and Evaluation Project**
 - Between 1996 and 1998, 3,001 families enrolled at 17 sites across the country
 - Randomly assigned to intervention or control at time of enrollment
 - 302 dropped due to non-participation at baseline
- **Recent efforts**
 - 2011, 2013, & 2014: RAND contracted to maintain and re-establish contact with families in the event that future waves of data collection occur.
 - To collect child well-being data with a minimal number of new questions
- **Contacting Youth**
 - In 2014, 24% of youth in study turned 18 (of remaining eligible: n = 2,609)

Background

- **Mode of contact and mode of survey completion play key roles in determining response rates (Kaplowitz, Hadlock, & Levine, 2004; Lin & Van Ryzin, 2012; and Millar & Dillman, 2011)**
- **Web traditionally yields lower rates than other modes (Sax, Gilmartin, & Bryant, 2003; Yetter & Capaccioli, 2010)**
- **Younger populations often prefer and respond to Web surveys at a higher rate (Carini et al., 2003; Diment & Garrett-Jones, 2007; McCabe et al., 2006; Schiotz, Bogelund, & Willaing, 2012)**
- **However, providing multiple options for responding may not increase overall response rates and may not be worth the added expense (Israel, 2012; Porter & Whitcomb, 2007)**

We look at response rate by mode, as well as between and within respondent groups (Youth vs. PCG) to determine whether differences exist.

Mode Experiment Methods

- **Goals:**

- To measure differences in response rate by mode within and across respondent groups:
 - Primary caregiver (PCG)
 - Youth

- **Methods**

- The sample was stratified across group and enrollment site.
- Each group was randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions:
 1. Mail-Only (MO)
 2. Web-Primary (WP)
 3. Mixed-Mode (MM)

	Youth Sample	PCG Sample	Full Sample
Mail-Only	207	663	870
Web-Primary	206	663	869
Mixed-Mode	207	663	870
Total	620	1989	2609

Methods Cont.

- **Each Condition Received 4 Contacts:**
 1. Pre-notification
 2. Survey invitation
 3. Thank you/reminder postcard or email
 4. Final survey invitation

- **Mail-Only**
 - Option to complete by mail only
 - All letters and surveys sent by mail

- **Web-Primary**
 - Option to complete online only
 - Letters containing survey Web link sent by email to those with email addresses; by mail for those without

- **Mixed-Mode**
 - Options to complete by mail, phone (incoming only), or Web
 - Materials sent by mail and email

Methods Cont.

- **Timeline:**

	Day 0	Day 3	Day 10	Day 21
Mail-Only	Pre-notification letter	1 st survey packet	Thank you /reminder postcard	2 nd survey packet
Web-Primary	Pre-notification letter or email	1 st email w/ Web link or letter	Thank you /reminder postcard or email w/ link	2 nd email w/ Web link or letter
Mixed-Mode	Pre-notification letter & email	1 st survey packet & email w/ link	Thank you /reminder postcard & email w/ link	2 nd survey packet & email w/ link

- **Day 38: Mode experiment ends**

Findings – Overall Mode Differences

- Both MO and WP conditions had worse response rates than MM
 - MO ($p = 0.009$)
 - WP ($p < 0.001$)
- WP had a worse response rate than MO ($p = 0.049$)

Mode	All Cases	
	N	RR
MM	239	27.4%
MO	192	22.0%
WP	159	18.3%
TOTAL	590	22.6%

Findings – Between Groups

- No significant difference in overall response rate between Youth and PCGs
- Within MO group, Youth were more likely to respond than PCGs (OR = 1.44, p = 0.047)

Mode	PCG		Youth		All	
	N	RR	N	RR	N	RR
MM	191	28.8%	48	23.2%	239	27.4%
MO	136	20.5%*	56	27.1%*	192	22.0%
WP	129	19.4%	30	14.6%	159	18.3%
TOTAL	456	22.9%	134	21.6%	590	22.6%

Findings – Within Groups

Some statistically significant differences by mode within respondent groups:

- **PCGs:**

- PCGs were less likely to respond in MO mode vs. MM mode (OR = 0.64, $p < 0.001$)
- PCGs were less likely to respond in WP mode vs. MM mode (OR = 0.60, $p < 0.001$)

- **Youth:**

- Youth were less likely to respond in the WP mode vs. MM (OR = 0.57, $p = 0.026$)
- Youth were less likely to respond in the WP mode vs. MO mode (OR = 0.40, $p = 0.051^*$)

**marginally significant*

Valid Email Addresses

- **In 2011, when RAND was contracted to conduct tracking effort, began asking for PCG email address as an additional means of future contact**
- **In the next tracking effort in 2013, also began asking PCGs to provide email addresses for youth**
- **For the mode experiment (2014), we had valid email addresses for 54.5% of the 1,989 PCG cases and 21.9% of the 620 youth cases**

Findings – Valid Email Address

- **After narrowing to only those with valid email addresses, we found that:**
 - **Compared to MM, both MO and WP conditions still had worse response rates ($p < 0.001$)**

Discussion

Contrary to some existing literature:

- **Youth in our study were more likely to respond by mail than Web, even among those with valid emails**
- **Youth were no more likely to respond by Web than PCGs**
- **Response rate was better for MM condition overall, which may indicate that providing more options for responding helps increase response**

Caveats

- **Longitudinal nature of study may influence mode of response (respondents have in past been offered multiple modes of responding; may have become accustomed to responding in one mode or another)**
- **Youth were contacted for first time in this wave of study, compared to PCGs who have been contacted multiple times (two groups may not be completely comparable)**
- **The characteristics and composition of our sample could also affect mode preference. While our sample has good geographic diversity, rural/urban inclusion, and racial/ethnic diversity, we are over represented by low income English speakers.**



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Questions?

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Thank you!